

The Tenth Sunday of Pentecost

July 20, 2008

Genesis 28:10-19a

Psalm 139: 1-11, 22-23

Romans 8:12-25

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It has been said that weeds are just perfectly good plants in the wrong place. I strongly suggest that you not repeat that in a gathering of farmers or at a garden center.

From our earthly, human point of view, weeds are just an annoying pain, an intrusion. There is something very satisfying in creating tidy, predictable rows, straight mounds of good rich dirt, in the fields or the gardens we have planted and tended with such care, and then, suddenly, weeds pop up out of nowhere. Weeds simply do not fit into the scheme of things in our world.

Weeds take up space without being productive. They take up water and food. They occupy far more than their share of the farmer's or gardener's time and energy and concern.

That being the case, we farmers and gardeners would say, "Pull it out, get rid of it. Sock it with some Roundup!"

Strange, isn't it, that the gardener in this morning's Gospel doesn't say that at all. He says to let it grow amid the good, productive wheat that he has sown in his field. Leave it alone.

Of course, this gardener is God, and He has a vastly different perspective on things than we have. God has a broader view of things. He also has an infinitely bigger garden. And, of course, He doesn't have to worry about rainfall and sunshine and bugs; He has all that under control.

Personally, I have some difficulty telling the weeds from the stuff I have planted, at least while it's all just a bunch of seedlings. I have probably cut short the productive life of a lot of perfectly good plants. It's really only after they start to look like the picture on the seed packet that I have any real confidence.

Of course the pictures on the seed packets are little masterpieces designed to instill confidence in the heart of the gardener. Some years ago, on I-95 coming into Jacksonville, there was a billboard with a huge picture of a perfect garden, the most perfect garden ever filled with perfect flowers of all varieties, with the motto, "Faith will never die as long as they print seed packets." That is an absolute truth, as long as we interpret faith along with Saint Paul as "belief in things you cannot see."

That's the question: even when we do see the little shoots, how can we really be sure what are weeds and what are, let's say, wheat, except by the fruit they produce? And how can either weeds or wheat produce fruit unless they grow and ripen? And how can they grow and ripen if we tear them up?

If that's true on the relatively tiny scale of our efforts, then it is true in God's fields and gardens, in this world of His creation.

Some of us weeds turned out okay. God, in His infinite wisdom, let us grow up right in the midst of all sorts of wheat, just to see what kind of fruit we might produce. God is very, very patient. He has all eternity to watch over the wheat of His field – and the weeds.

In His Holy Name.